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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: DPRK NUCLEAR TEST, PRESIDENT CHEN
SHUI-BIAN'S "SECOND REPUBLIC" IDEA

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies gave significant coverage October 19 to Taipei prosecutors' raid of the Chinatrust Financial Holding Company on Wednesday and the detention of two senior officers in charge of financial and legal affairs. News coverage also focused on the year-end Taipei and Kaohsiung mayoral race; on the Department of Health's sudden decision Wednesday to ban hairy crabs carried by passengers from China after traces of carcinogens were detected in these crabs; and on further investigation into the Presidential Office's fund for state affairs case. The pro-status quo "China Times" ran a banner headline on page four that said "Protests to Oust Bian Give a Lift to [Frank] Hsieh and [James] Soong But Do Damage to Hau [Lung-pin]."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" commented on North Korea's recent nuclear test, saying that China is the first to bear the brunt of the nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula. A separate "Apple Daily" opinion piece said the nuclear test has confirmed the urgency for Taiwan to buy weapons from the United States. An editorial in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" discussed President Chen's idea of a "Second Republic Constitution," saying the concept can "help bridge the notions of constitutional 'amendment' and constitutional 'enactment.'" End summary.

¶3. DPRK Nuclear Test

A) "Beijing Has Changed from Observer to Victim"

Columnist Antonio Chiang commented in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 500,000] (10/19):

"On the surface, the main characters in the North Korean nuclear crisis are Pyongyang and Washington. But to judge from a more substantive perspective, it is not the United States, but China, that is the first to bear the brunt of it. This is because if the United States adjusts its relations with North Korea, conflicts between the two sides can be easily reduced or even eliminated. But Beijing and Pyongyang are neighbors, and a Pyongyang in possession of nuclear weapons will forge permanent restraints on China's strategic security.

"Beijing's reaction this time has far surpassed the expectations of the United States and Japan, and has won a positive view from the international community, which believes China has demonstrated a responsible attitude. In reality, however, Beijing's attitude toward North Korea has long faced a dilemma. The White House has been stretched too thin and has long desired to treat the North Korea issue as a regional security issue, hoping that China will shoulder more responsibility. Strategy experts in Beijing are currently arguing about how China could cope with the [nuclear] crisis. . . .

"The motive behind Pyongyang's development of nuclear weapons may be aimed at the United States, Japan, or others. But no country will live up nuclear weapons once it possesses them, and international politics is evolving every day. ... North Korea has a much stronger nationalistic sentiment than China, and history shows that North Korea has been subjected to more bullying than China. China can develop nuclear weapons for its nationalism, so why cannot North Korea? When China's ally, Pakistan, detonated nuclear devices in 1998, China did not try to stop it. Why has Beijing adopted a double standard now? Was it any different from the hegemonic thinking of U.S. imperialism? These are the questions Beijing will find very difficult to answer."

B) "Nuclear Crisis Confirms Urgency of Arms Procurements"

DPP China Affairs Director Lai I-chung opined in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 500,000] (10/19):

"North Korea's nuclear test on October 9 has again escalated the security crisis in Northeast Asia. For Taiwan, which is about a two-and-a-half-hour flight from Pyongyang, the new changes in geostrategy in East Asia triggered by Pyongyang's crisis, as well as its impact on Taiwan's regional security, have confirmed the need for Taiwan to buy the three items of weaponry [from the United States].

"North Korea performed a nuclear test in October and test-fired long-range ballistic missiles in July. We therefore cannot exclude the possibility that North Korea may have the capability to launch nuclear missiles. Even though there is no direct conflict between Taiwan and North Korea, Pyongyang may still be likely to launch missiles when tension escalates or a war breaks out in the future. If ballistic missiles hit Taiwan accidentally due to imprecision or miscalculation, Taiwan, which has zero missile defense capability and no hardware or software to link itself with SHUI-BIAN'S "SECOND REPUBLIC" IDEA

information from the United States and Japan, will be unable to defend itself or get early warning about the missiles. All the more, given the lack of relevant information, Taiwan may likely misjudge the situation and cope with it as if the missiles are the harbinger of Chinese attacks against the island, and unexpectedly turn the nuclear crisis into a crisis across the Taiwan Strait. ...

"In addition, the United Nations has just approved international sanctions against North Korea, including inspecting all airplanes and ships going in and out of North Korea. Since the waters on both sides of the island of Taiwan are important gateways for North Korea, Southeast Asia, and South Asia, and Kaohsiung Harbor used to be a harbor at which North Korean ships chose to berth, there are possibilities that North Korean ships might enter the Taiwan Strait to dodge checks by the United States and Japan on the high seas. China may also interfere with such a situation. Since [Taiwan's] three arms deals with the United States include key interfaces to link Taiwan with U.S. and Japanese information, and they involve, to a certain extent, early-warning capabilities, the deals may be helpful for Taiwan in handling North Korean vessels. If Taiwan fails to complete those arms deals in time, ... it may cause difficulties for Taiwan in interacting with the United States and Japan and create new variables in the Taiwan Strait, which may increase new uncertainties [for the area]. ..."

¶4. President Chen Shui-bian's "Second Republic" Idea

"Time to Proclaim 'Second Republic'"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (10/19):

"... The concept of a 'Second Republic Constitution' can help bridge the notions of constitutional 'amendment' and constitutional 'enactment' and include a comprehensive revamping that can both remove past 'provisional' articles or clauses or obsolete and anachronistic features. Such an option could meet the needs of advocates of a 'new' constitution while respecting the feelings of citizens with an emotional or political attachment to the R.O.C. moniker. Nevertheless, the thinking behind President Chen's mention

of Koo's concept of enacting a 'Second Republic Constitution' has also disappointed some elder statesman in the 'pan-green' camp, especially since this path would not feature a 'rectification' of Taiwan's official name into the 'Republic of Taiwan' or more simple 'Taiwan.' ...

"Moreover, we believe that re-engineering of Taiwan's constitutional order is urgently needed and should focus primarily on the question of the central government system and enhance protections for human and civic rights. We believe there is little to be gained by raising questions of our formal national title or to try to reinvent the wheel of the process of constitutional revision, projects which could not possibly be approved by the opposition Kuomintang-People First Party controlled Legislature. ..."

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